

CORPORATE CONSULTING GROUP

A Winning Mindset

Tips on Personal Development

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2023

Principles of Success

Almighty says, “He does not change the condition of people unless they change what is in their hearts”.

[Al-Ra’ad 13:11]

“A man is doomed if his today is no better than yesterday”, said by the beloved Prophet Muhammad [pbuh].

A Winning Mindset

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Planning-4-Success

Succeeding is a fundamental right of all human beings, men and women alike. Our strive for success begins as soon as we are born. Our foremost success of being a child is to grab attention of loved ones; standup and walk on our own; begin to speak; etc. Then as we go to School, our success then is to learn how to draw pictures, read, write and do math and ultimately pass exams with good grades. As we continue to grow, our parameters of success keep changing. What we can conclude is that success is a moving target.

Success comprises of two levels, namely; purpose and goals. Purpose is the level one and is the ultimate destination to reach. Something that is described in the form of vision and mission statements. For example, a social entrepreneur would have a vision to provide job opportunities to the poorest of the poor. A corporate may envision maximize return on owners' equity. An individual may wish to offer a decent life to his loved ones. Goals are level two, that collectively contribute to the achievement of purpose. For example, establishing a profitable business would help the social entrepreneur to generate employment and corporate to maximize return on owners' equity. Likewise, a prosperous job would help an individual to improve his financial capacity and afford a good living for his loved ones.

Speaking from individual's point of view, everyone may define his or her purpose by in the context of beliefs, preferences and what he or she values the most. However, those who know, it is true that while we define one purpose and Almighty defines yet another purpose for us. HE Has categorically defined our purpose. HE says, HE has created death and life (of men and women) in order to establish who does righteous deeds in his or her life. At another place, HE says, "HE has created men (and women) and jinn (male and female) to worship Him alone. Lastly, we can conclude from different verses that HE has created men (and women) for the eternal life; this worldly life is just a test. In the eternal life, people will be polarized into dwellers of Heavens and dwellers of Hell based on the absolute justice and mercy of Almighty. From this we may summarize our purpose as follows: -

- a. Our ultimate destination is the eternal life.
- b. This life and its adornments or challenges are for a test.
- c. Almighty has guided us on the path of success and warned us if we transgress, yet we have a choice what to follow in this life. In other words, we have been truly empowered.

Goals are the level two of success. We use Maslow's needs' hierarchy as an analogy to identify generalized goals that individuals normally pursue in their lives. To begin with, our most primary set of goals are to satisfy our physiological needs – food, shelter, health, physical comfort etc. Then comes next set of goals

i.e. to secure and maximize the given physiological satisfaction for the future. Next set of goals are to develop belongingness – family and friends, relationships, emotional support, etc. Subsequently, our set of goals are geared to attaining self-worth or esteem – confidence, respect from others, achievements, etc. Finally, our goals would consist of striving for higher level of competence or establishing one's mettle such as creativity, scholarly thinking, problem solving, etc. One can add yet another set of goals beyond the Maslow's hierarchy i.e. selfless commitment to a purpose or principles.

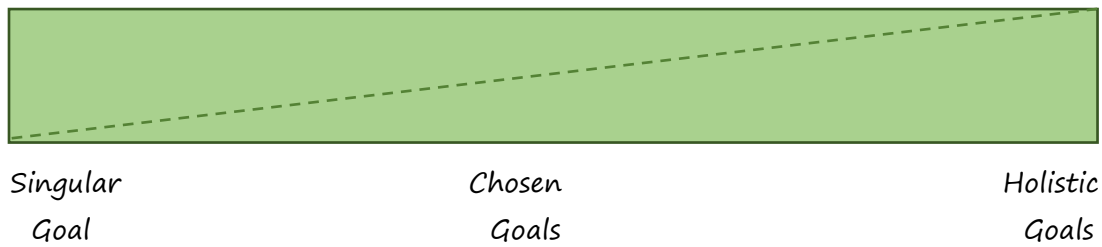
Maslow's needs hierarchy presents bottom to upwards arrangement of goals in accordance to their relative urgency. Goals at the bottom are the most urgent. His original thinking has been that individuals strive for each set of goals at a time and in a sequential fashion. He may have concluded this on the premise that individuals prioritize their goals on the basis of relative urgency. Once individuals satisfy their most urgent goals then they move on to goals that are of lesser urgency, so on and so forth.

Maslow's hierarchy seems logical however, it cannot be taken for granted. Though it seems plausible that some individuals might compromise on their less urgent but higher order goals in order to achieve their more urgent but lower order goals first. However, this cannot be generalized, as examples abound where individuals

strive for higher order goals such as self-actualization without having achieved optimal satisfaction of lower order goals. Put it differently, an individual committed to his principles such as honesty, contentment and service to others often compromise on maximizing their lower order goals like physiological needs and security, and strive for higher order goals like self-esteem, self-actualization and many a times service to others. Instances abound. Having said, an alternate view could be that individuals aim for satisfying their goals holistically. For instance, it is common that such individuals strive for building relationships, improving self-esteem and doing service to the people while working to earn their basic livelihood.

In reality, different individuals would approach goals in their own way. Hence, they can be identified at different points on a continuum. Average individuals would aim for attaining satisfaction of their goals holistically. Some individuals may confine their struggle for satisfying singular goals, mostly focusing on the psychological and safety needs with no end to it. However, some exceptions may be there of individuals aiming at self-actualization or service to other at the cost of more urgent needs. Then there are a few individuals in between the two extremes of the continuum aiming at satisfaction of chosen goals. [See Figure 1, below].

Figure 1. Continuum of Goals



Average individuals with a holistic approach towards their goals have higher chances of achieving their purpose. Those who are in the middle of the continuum would not be able to achieve their purpose optimally. Lastly, those who pursue singular goals never achieve their purpose, no matter how enhanced is their satisfaction in a single goal. For example, an individual may have accumulated humongous wealth but he may not have the pleasure of self-esteem; command respect of the people around him; or, would not attain self-actualization.

Virtues and Values

A success plan would not be complete if it does not take into account the virtues and values of success. Virtues and values are the guiding light to live a successful plan. Here are a few established suggestive virtues and values of success.

- a. Faith, hope and fear
- b. Awareness
- c. Gratitude
- d. Power of cherishing
- e. Discipline

- f. Financial independence
- g. Social interdependence
- h. Liberated mind
- i. Confidence
- j. Rationality
- k. Positive energy
- l. Time management
- m. Say NO

Conclusion

Purpose without goals is a fantastic idea, while goals without a purpose are unguided targets. Being said, we must have a clear purpose and consistent goals, for then our plan can become rational and we can be sure of achieving our purpose. Sometimes in the absence of a purpose, goals themselves become the purpose. For example, we may keep educating ourselves but not utilizing the learning in a meaningful manner, such as seeking a job. Similarly, if the purpose is distorted or mistakenly defined, achievement of goals leads us to nowhere.

Almighty does not compel us to accept what He has decided for us or. We are free to come up with a purpose within our bounded knowledge and rationality. By choosing our own purpose, can we pursue both purposes side by side or altogether override the purpose Almighty has decided for us? Obviously,

even then the purpose Almighty has decided for us shall prevail. If our purpose is complimentary to the divine purpose then it is plausible otherwise, our achievements towards our purpose would become irrelevant once we move to our inevitable eternal life. Those who pursue the divine purpose would be successful [in Shaa Allah] in this and eternal life, but those who don't their success would have limited horizon in this life only, while their success in the inevitable eternal life shall remain at the mercy of Almighty. He may forgive them or punish them according to his absolute wisdom. Choice is entirely given to each individual.

Thy Wellness

Wellness is the most treasured gift from Almighty. Be it physical or psychological wellbeing, both are critical for a good life. Our psychological being comprises of mind and heart. Both are complimentary to each other.

Mind is where our cognitions, values, emotions and motives are embedded, while spiritual traits or as commonly referred to spirituality, are in the heart. Spiritual traits provide compass and help harness our cognitions, values, emotions and motives. This view of spirituality is different from the general understanding of it in mysticism.

There are certain fundamental spiritual traits like; faith, morality, conscience, contentment, gratitude, respect and trust, etc. The presence of these traits is a sign of spiritual wellness and contribute to nurturing acceptance; awareness; self-regulation; righteousness; perseverance; and, hope; etc. In other words, these traits cleanse the heart. Moreover, these traits have significant influence in shaping our cognitions and emotions too. Put it differently, these traits contribute to our psychological wellbeing.

However, often times our psychological wellbeing is compromised as our mind and heart are hijacked by negative influences. In particular, our heart becomes diseased or as they

say, rusted when we develop Ego, pride, hatred, bias, greed, scarcity, suspicion, etc. It eventually leads to aggressive behavior; desire for more; competition; jealousy; arrogance; despondency; stress; denial; etc.

In short, spiritual wellness or cleanliness of the heart is necessary for a healthy mind and happy living. To ensure psychological wellbeing, we need to proactively practice higher order soft skills. Some are listed below: -

- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Delight of Cherishing
- ✓ Journey to Awareness
- ✓ Liberating your mind
- ✓ Shedding EGO and PRIDE
- ✓ Practicing Rationality
- ✓ Unleashing Opportunities
- ✓ Building Confidence
- ✓ Stop Contesting and Start Cherishing
- ✓ Turning Tribulations into Positive Energy
- ✓ Building Interdependence
- ✓ And more...

A Journey to Awareness

Slavery is not always in Master-Slave relationship, it can be within oneself. Poverty is not always lack of financial resources, it can be lack of choices. Insanity is not always a dysfunction of the brain, it can be lack of attention. Ignorance is the common underlying factor in these syndromes. Being said, reversal of it is possible through turning ignorance into awareness, also referred to as mindfulness.

Ignorance is commonly considered a bliss hence a positive gesture. However, between the lines it indicates lack of awareness. Ignorance is a state of mind, which essentially means blackout, lack of knowledge or understanding, turning a blind eye to reality, wishful thinking and to the extreme denying at the subconscious level. Such as, "No news is good news". Some types of positive thinking are also ignorance. Such as, "Believing I can do it, but making no concrete efforts". Lastly, the term unconscious-incompetence also denotes to a type of ignorance.

Ignorance on the face of it might be blissful for the life as we can live carelessly. But in reality, ignorance does not wipe-off threats and ease challenges that we all face day-in day-out. Likewise, by being ignorant we naively let go opportunities. Being said, ignorance is not a bliss but deprivation.

Embarking on the Journey to Awareness

Almighty informed us that the first thing He did before sending Prophet Adam and Hawa (his wife) to the heavens, was that He informed them of Do's & Don'ts for a continued living in the heavens. Since then till descend of the last prophet Muhammad [pbuh], there have been divine revelations sent down for the awareness of humans (man and women). He has prescribed reading and learning from the Quran the last revelation for all humans to come. Besides, He has mandated for every human who would ever live on this earth, to acquire knowledge and learn. Thus, we have basis to say that Almighty wants us to be aware of and to always make informed actions or choices. Thus, our journey to awareness is fundamental to our existence.

Awareness can have many dimensions, namely: Know thy creator; Know thyself; Know thy purpose; Know thy goals and directions; Know thy roles, rights and responsibilities; Know others rights on thyself; Know thy situation; and last but not the least know thy manners and actions, and their implications.

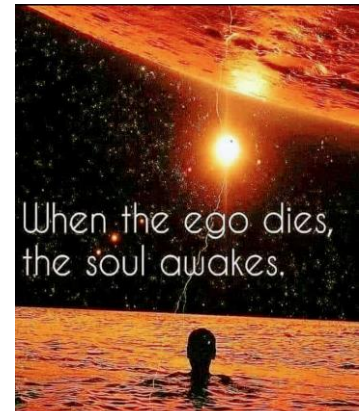
Conclusion

Ignorance is lacking knowledge and understanding and to ignore is a behavior which requires higher consciousness. The former is naïve and much common but the latter is empowerment but not so common.

It is our own choice to gain awareness and empower ourselves or live like an ignorant and deprive ourselves of an empowered life.

Liberate your Mind

Liberated mind is a freedom maximized! It is filled with conscience, confidence, self-esteem, choices and without a negative notion. Such as; regrets, hang-ups, shame, guilt, pain, anger, frustration, anxiety, dread, etc. Paradoxically, our minds are hijacked when we consciously or unconsciously succumb to our ego, desires, impulse, assumptions, beliefs, emotions, opinions and bias.



Selectivity and distortion are a psychological reality. All day long we hear a lot of information but listen to only selected pieces that are consistent to our looked-for perception. We are also capable of distorting the unwanted information, which we listen to but struggle to ignore. We do so to continue to deny the reality yet assume we are right. The famous research on the "Watergate Scandal" revealed that our minds are capable of speaking lies yet believe that we are talking nothing but truth. In Quran Allah has warned us that at times, we may think we are righteous but in reality, we are not.

Having said often our ego, assumptions, beliefs, desires, emotions, opinions and bias inhibit our minds from embracing

reality. Subsequently, our perception is fantasized and actions are directed on the wrong course. It is a typical manifestation of a hijacked mind.

Many a times, unconsciously we live our entire lives as if we are heading in the right direction until the reality is unraveled to us. Allah says in Quran to those who continue to deny the unknown i.e. reality, truth and destined, etc. that there shall come a moment when they will see the unknown with their naked eyes; perhaps when they will meet the angel of death or shall be raised to stand in front of Allah on the day of Judgment. At that point in time, their life long mind-set that led them deny the reality shall be vanished and only the reality shall remain. Examples abound.

For instance, we all dream about a lot of things happening in our lives. Sometimes exciting and sometimes a nightmare. The excitement or nightmare remains a reality for us until we wake up only to find out it was just a dream. Similarly, children born with a silver spoon might not ever think that their situation would ever change, so they usually fail to prepare for the worst. Instances abound where peoples' life changed on 360 degree and the they were never prepared for it. Likewise, lot of times we keep denying a reality until we have to accept it – A Doctor might tell to his patient that if he continues to smoke, soon he will develop serious

health problems. But because his mind is hijacked by his desire to continue smoking, he will simply give no heed to the Doctor until he gets his very first heart attack! Let us look at each factor that effectively inhibit our mind –

a. EGO

EGO is our belief about ourselves vs. others. Three types of EGO are fundamental: I am OK you are not; You are OK I am not; and, both are OK. First type of EGO blocks our mind from accepting any new idea or reality from outside that does not match with our concept. For example, how can I be wrong and the other person be right. I am the most exalted, how can I accept someone else above me. When Prophet Musa [pbuh] reminded pharaoh of the Almighty and that he should bow to Him, he replied I am the almighty. It was his EGO that blocked his mind from accepting the reality. So often we all fall prey to our EGO and lose.

b. Assumptions & Beliefs

There was this manager who always disbelieved his fellow employees. One day, an employee could not come to office. The manager refused to accept his excuse and immediately fired him assuming that he was lying. In short, his deep-down disbelief led him make baseless assumption about the employee, consequently he acted unjustly. Such incidents are common in our daily lives that lead to wrong decisions and broken relationships.

It is interesting to note that the relationship between assumptions and beliefs is double sided. Assumptions that we carry over and over turn into beliefs and later our beliefs shape our assumptions.

c. Desires

Indeed, desires fuel motivation but it would not be wrong to say desires are biggest of all evils. Allah says in Quran about those who go astray that they have taken their desires as their God. Desires are a powerful deterrence to our conscience and morality. At times our desire becomes a purpose in itself hence become a priority and we tend to pursue it by hook or crook. It is the desires that let a person ignore his principles, values and morals.

d. Emotions

Often, we act impulsively in a given situation and end up in a mess. Emotions of happiness, excitement and fervor cause happy, joyful and delighted sensation. Our usual responses in such a situation are largely impulsive. For instance, if we find a discount-offer exciting, it is likely that we immediately respond without thinking if we really need this product or not. Similarly, emotions like discontentment, despondency or loss causes frustration and anger. In such conditions, we still tend to act impulsively but for worse. It is, however, argued that during sad feelings our mind is

more thoughtful, than when we are happy. Nevertheless, sustained sad feeling can lead to negative attitude.

e. Opinions and Bias

Our opinion can be right or baseless. Whatever is the case, opinions often make us pre-judge a situation or a person. So, we always run the risk of misjudging our situations and people, hence are likely to make wrong decision. Bias is a generalized opinion that we all form about a type of situation or a person. Often bias is baseless yet it effectively influences our actions.

We can now see how the above factors influence or hijack our minds, so much so that we effectively fall prey to these factors in making our choices.

Once all sorts of influences that inhabit our mind are cleansed, it will then be liberated and its actions are improved. Here the question arises, is it humanly possible to erase the influences and liberate the minds? The answer is, "If there is a will there is always a way." It would be preferable to suggest a few guidelines rather than making a prescription to liberate our minds:

1. **Faith** Faith is the acceptance of Almighty and His actions. It follows conviction on one's fate – No one can stop the advantages that Almighty has decided for me, nor anyone

can inflict loss to me when the Almighty protects me. This make us content and optimistic and content.

2. **Self-regulation.** It is crucial that a person must exercise self-discipline in his life. In religion, it is referred to as Taq'wah, which means following the conscience and rationality. One has to learn to say NO to EGO, baseless assumptions and beliefs, impulsive desires, pre-judgments and bias.
3. **Delay gratification.** The EQ research findings concluded that ability to delay gratification is one of the important skills that people with high EQ possess. It allows them to avert their impulses and act rationally. It is also a manifestation of Taq'wah.
4. **Keep Patient.** Often, we respond in haste because we lose hope. Patience is the ability to see a bright future or light at the end of the tunnel. It enables foregoing impulsive gratification for a more sustain advantage. It is referred to as "Sab'ar" in religion.

Conclusion

Stronger faith, self-regulation, delaying gratification and patience are a few critical competencies that help overcome the inhibitions and liberate our mind for better.

Delight of Cherishing

Cherishing is the most rewarding of all. But often, we undervalue our given privileges and possessions. Quote, And 'remember' when you [Bani Israel] said, "O Musa! ([pbuh]) We cannot endure the same meal 'every day'. So 'just' call upon your Lord [Allah] on our behalf, He will bring forth for us some of what the earth produces of herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions." Moses scolded 'them', "Do you exchange what is better for what is worse? 'You can' go down to any village and you will find what you have asked for." [2:61] Unquote.

Here it is important to note that a person would only continue progressing when he or she feels happy and satisfied of his present life, which in turn means valuing his already gained possessions and achievements. Puzzlingly, however, we as a society unknowingly rationalize our dissatisfaction with what we have and craving for more as motivation.

Besides hampering satisfaction, thankless attitude makes people unhappy, envy of others; aggressive; and, above all call for displeasure of Allah. If such a behavior persists, it affects the emotional and physical wellbeing of a person, which makes his or her life truly miserable. Ironically, however, people often ignore to recognize their miseries, as they tend to seek happiness from the quantity of achievements rather than quality of achievements.

Unfortunately, the world also acknowledges each other by the quantity of their achievements.

What it takes to live a progressive life and keep moving to new heights by leaps and bounces? It is no rocket science just need to change your attitude of thanklessness to the attitude of thankfulness. Allah almighty (the Divine Lord) assures us, "And 'remember' when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more. But if you are ungrateful, surely My punishment is severe.' [14:7]"

What does gratitude mean and how can we express our gratitude in a befitting manner so as to earn Allah almighty's pleasure and blessings.

Gratitude is a mindset of living with a cherishing attitude. It is an honest feeling of thankfulness and acknowledgement. Expressing gratitude to Allah almighty means being thankful to Him for all the blessings he has bestowed upon us; and even for all that He Has given to others but not to us; and, finally saving us from the wrongs – excessive is nothing but a waste and spoils. For example, excessive of fat causes disease, excessive of wealth leads to inflation and excessive power often corrupts.

The fact is through the day we face diverse situations. Some of them are bothersome indeed. If we are not in the habit of responding to every situation with a gratitude, then we are likely

become the victim of negativity. It is very much true that we cannot remove the bothersome situations altogether but we can definitely learn to express gratitude. To demonstrate the skill, we show you some examples in the following table. Each example presents a bothersome situation very common in our daily lives, and explains how we can learn to express gratitude by simply responding to each situation rather positively.

Situation	Response with a gratitude
A glass of water is half filled	Half a glass is sufficient for me, anything extra would have been a waste.
Of late I get tired and exhausted quickly	I got an early diagnosis before the disease might have had caused problem
Failure	I was able to improve on time. I might not have given attention to the problems in my studies if I had not failed
Loss	My business is still up and running, I have the opportunity to recover the loss from the future profits.
Hardship	Every time I had to face hardship; it had followed by ease.
Poverty	Poverty is not a curse; it is just that I face some extra difficulties

	which saves me from falling into comfort zone
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Conclusion

The Divine Lord (Allah Almighty) says, "It could be that you dislike something, when it is good for you; and it could be that you like something when it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know." [2:216]. He says, "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient." [2:155]

Expressing Gratitude

- ✓ First and the foremost is to worship none but Allah all mighty alone with a sincere heart, devotion and commitment!
- ✓ Pronounce gratitude to Allah all mighty in your words and actions – acknowledge in words Allah's favors unto you; always follow His path; and, pray!
- ✓ Have conviction that Allah all mighty is sufficient for you and He is the best disposer of your affairs!
- ✓ Do favors unto mankind for the sake of pleasing Allah alone, esp. to parents, next of kin, relatives, neighbors and the challenged ones.
- ✓ Give others their rights and treat them with honor and act justly with all without fail – do not show pride, belittle them or act aggressively with any of them!

- ✓ *Be contented with Halal and Tayyab and do not seek Haram and Najis – always cherish your haves and have nots!*
- ✓ *Avail your blessings in a rightful manner – neither act miserly nor should be extravagant in your living!*
- ✓ *Never pity yourself or your situation!*
- ✓ *Embrace challenges, difficulties and losses with patience!*
- ✓ *Stop complaining, think solutions!*

Practicing Rationality

How we think, process information, reach to conclusions and make choices impact the reliability of our behaviors – actions and decisions. On the one extreme we can define our behavior being rational and on the other extreme we can say our behaviors are rationalized. The former is judicious and reasonable while the latter is motivated and unreasonable.

The Arabic word for rationality is “Hikmah”. Unlike the wide spread misnomer that if one tries to find rationality in religion he will go astray, Almighty has categorically advised Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] and through him to us all, “To transact with people with Hikmah – meaning to behave rationally”. He further emphasizes, “And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart – about all those [one] will be questioned”. [17:36].

Hikmah or rationality means insightfulness; knowledge; and, empathy. On the contrary, rationalization is making false or baseless arguments to gain pursue specific goals. Examples abound. In Arabic it is referred to as “Hujat” and often used in reference to the unreasonable positions or concerns taken against the divine scriptures.

Having said, rationality is a sign of maturity and level headedness. By being rational one is able to respond to situations and people independent of his personal bias and whims thus he is likely to arrive at truthful conclusions, informed choices and calculated decisions. For example, if we were to present an information honestly, we will candidly present it as objectively as possible thus increase its reliability for the listener. Similarly, if we were to evaluate an opportunity, we would look into all the pros and cons as objectively as possible without being biased or whimsical about it.

In contrast, rationalization is a position'' driven thinking and action. By rationalizing we justify our thinking and actions that suit our beliefs, positions and goals. In other words, we justify our otherwise wrong thinking or actions by hook or crook. For example, we would first come to a decision about a person, then try to justify it by focusing on his relevant credentials. Similarly, using our guts we will decide to take or leave an opportunity, then we shall justify it by hook or crook.

Often people who indulge in illegal practices tend to rationalize their behaviors. For example, imagine someone is in a hurry to reach somewhere, so he will justify crossing the signal on the Red light. Similarly, another person may justify bribing the authorities, when he seeks undue favors. So on, and so forth.

We have a lesson to follow in the above: Success lies in being rational. If we want to think and act judiciously and reasonably or fall prey to our false positions and motivations is a choice everyone should make. Nevertheless, being rational is not enough. We have to be sensitive to other persons' concerns, interests and respect them.

Unleash Your Opportunities

Say No to Pessimistic Attitude

Being optimistic is a natural way to live happier and healthier life. It comes with the thankful attitude. On the contrary, pessimism inhibits psychological and physical wellness. It comes with the thankless attitude. It is evidenced that Optimists engage in every situation and are able to unleash opportunities and overcome challenges. While the Pessimists withdraw themselves from most of the situations thus forego opportunities by surrendering to the perceived challenges. An extremely consoling Hadees-e-Pak of the Prophet Muhammad *[[pbuh]]*, favors optimism by telling us that: “Allah has promised khair [good] when a person is in comfort or in pain, to those who remain thankful and do sabar [patient], respectively.”

It is time to pause and ponder! In sura Rahman Almighty reminds us about some of His significant favors in the following words, “The Most Merciful; Taught the Qur’an; Created man; [And], Taught him expressiveness; and, many more. Yet, we often ignore to acknowledge it. Even sadly, we often do not value it in the manner we should. In other words, we often take a pessimistic view towards our life. Such an attitude only diminishes our wellness.

It is also pertinent to say that at times, we respond pessimistically to Almighty's favors by our false belief that all we have earned is by our sheer intelligence and hard work. In other words, we proclaim as if we are self-made. Ironically, it is an illusion of one's beliefs and thoughts, which eventually builds pride and perception of supremacy – all false and destructive for oneself.

When we respond to an opportunity rather pessimistically or proclaim, "I have achieved so and so with my knowledge and hard work" it is sheer refuting Almighty's favors unto us. In Sura Rahman, Allah has repeatedly said to us, "And how many favors will you deny". In this verse, Almighty is teaching us the wisdom of acknowledging over refuting the favors. Overcoming the habit of refuting is the first step towards building a habit of acknowledging. We have evidence in the story of Qaroon. He was a wealthiest man lived during the time of Prophet Musa *[[pbuh]]*. He proclaimed that whatever he is given is because of his intelligence and hard work. He was buried along with his entire wealth as a curse for taking pride in himself. All those who used to envy his wealth and status in other words refute their blessings, subsequently thanked Almighty for what was given to them.

Contrary to the generalized belief that *nauzubillah* Almighty needs our thanks, it is we who are the beneficiaries of being thankful to Almighty. Being said, as we stop refuting and begin

acknowledging Almighty's favors unto us, we are be able switch from pessimistic to optimistic attitude in life – a must for a cheerful living, which is yet another Almighty's favor unto us.

Let us now introspect how we turn pessimistic towards our situations thus refute our heap of opportunities and undermine value of our achievements. Ignorance, defiance and blatant denial are most common pessimistic behaviors.

a. Ignorance

Ignorance is a habit that is build out of pessimistic attitude. It simply blindfolds us of the opportunities and their value thus we are unconsciously forced to take a negative view of our situations and people. We are ignorant when we do not understand our situations or listen to someone in the right perspective. To elaborate, we may consider riding bicycle a simple task, until we try riding it for the first time and fail. This shows that until we experience riding, we remain in ignorance of our capacity. Failure in this case brings correction in our perspective. Maslow a famous theorist termed this ignorance as “Unconscious-incompetence”. Meaning a person is unconsciously incompetent yet he thinks he is competent until he finds it out. Having said, proactively seeking or exploring knowledge or experience and then valuing it is necessary to overcome ignorance.

b. Defiance

Defiance is yet another habit built on pessimistic attitude. It virtually camouflages opportunities and their value. Most of the times, defiance is an unconscious response. In the state of defiance, we continue to generalize that nothing is good or valuable. For instance, we may develop the habit of focusing on problems and ignoring the opportunities or undermining their value. Consequently, we would let go opportunities unturned and would never cherish our achievements.

c. Blatant denial

Blatant denial is an aggressiveness, which is another manifestation of pessimistic attitude. When a situation challenges our status-quo or poses a threat, we tend to deny it. Consequently, the denial unconsciously blindfolds us of the opportunities and their value embedded in the situation. Here we choose to take an aggressive stance vis-à-vis our situations or people. To explain, we often deliberately refuse to concede in an argument because we don't want to accept that someone else is right, for it will hurt our EGO or we would lose our advantages. Thus, by denying we unconsciously refuse to take advantage in a given situation in relationship with certain people.

Conclusion

We all have been given a choice either to take a pessimistic or optimistic view of Almighty's favors on us and situations we face day-in day-out. The optimists are more likely to earn Almighty's pleasure, live rather cheerfully and unleash every opportunity that comes across with a gratitude. Before we can switch to optimism and increase our chances of success, we however, need to develop the habit of saying no to our pessimistic attitude.

To read more about optimistic attitude, read my lecture titled, "Delight of Cherishing".

Confidence

Life in modern age is full of uncertainties, pressing demands and emerging challenges along with your inability to keep up with faster changes in the immediate environment. Confidence is the key competency to succeed in the aforesaid situation. It is a behavioral trait, which describes one's outlook in pursuing a target or attaining success. Confidence is the key to embrace the emerging situation. It is built on the basis of internal as well as external factors. Being said, few contributing factors are within your control but a lot are outside your permeable limits. The most important of all is faith followed by a host of other factors like personal competency, experience, attitude and perhaps motivation. On the external side, most prominent are encouragement and acknowledgement from others, empowerment, support, reinforcements, and risk factors, etc.

A reliable support system acts as a catalyst for boosting your confidence. A sufficiently reasoned faith on Allah provides most reliable basis to boost and maintain confidence and it invokes Allah's even bigger support. Allah once boosted the confidence of the Prophet [pbuh] and his fellows during a war, by saying that He is sending X number of angels join to join in the fight. Later He revealed that he sent the angels only to boost confidence, for

actually the victory is from Allah. Thus, it concludes that you get real time confidence when you develop strong faith on Allah.

Nevertheless, some pseudo approaches to boost confidence are also propagated, which actually make the person intoxicated and act impulsively. Encouraging people to think positive (not necessarily realistic) like forcing them to believe “I can do it”, is considered most powerful confidence booster. Other techniques include exploiting the greed like offering humongous rewards and last but not the least, transiting people into “fun” mode whereby their cognitions are effectively blocked and they are made to act impulsively. While all this seem to boost confidence rather quickly. Nevertheless, the confidence built on pseudo bases is lost even more quickly.

Conclusion

If you want to keep your confidence high and realistic then you must rely on Allah with full conviction and strive towards your pursuits confidently and let not the outcomes lower your confidence knowing that Allah is the owner of outcomes.

Stop Contesting and Start Cherishing: A Life Changing Recipe

It is time to pause and ponder! Almighty showers His favors unto us from birth through life to death, irrespective of our creed or color, but often we contest that we have earned it with our sheer intelligence and hard work. Even sadly, often we do not value what is given to us in the manner we should. When we proclaim, "I have achieved so and so with my knowledge and hard work" or respond to an opportunity rather pessimistically, it is sheer denouncing Almighty's favors unto us. In Sura Rahman, Allah has repeatedly said to us, "And how many favors will you deny". This explains that by stop contesting Almighty favors we take first step towards acknowledging. Qaroon, the wealthiest man during the time of Prophet Musa *[pbuh]* had made similar proclamation. He was buried along with his entire wealth as a curse for taking pride in himself.

Contrary to the generalized belief that *nauzobillah* Almighty needs our thanks, it is we who are the beneficiaries of being thankful to Almighty. Being said, as we stop contesting and begin acknowledging Almighty's favors unto us, we will be able switch from pessimistic to optimistic attitude in life. Yet another Almighty's favor unto us.

Let us introspect how we contest situations as an analogy to how we contest Almighty's favors unto us. We can say ignorance, defiance and blatant denial are most common ways of contesting.

We shall explore each behavior in some detail in the following paragraphs.

a. Ignorance

It is Almighty favor unto us that He kept sending divine revelations to inform us about the realities and the purpose of life and for our guidance. Had He not sent the divine revelations; we all would have been ignorant and losers on the day of judgement, especially. Almighty said in Quran, "I (Almighty) take witness of time (era) that all human beings are at a loss, except those who have faith; do righteous deeds; and, advice each other of Haq (emaan) and Sabar (patience with hope)". Those who considered the revelations as favors immediately embraced the same as soon as those were read to them and secured infinite bounties of the heavens.

We are ignorant when we do not have knowledge: Either no one told us or we never experienced or explored it. To elaborate, we may think riding a bicycle is simple until we try riding it for the first time and fail. It is clear that sooner we are told or we experience a situation we are able to embrace it. Maslow a famous theorist termed ignorance as "Unconscious-incompetence". Meaning a person is unconsciously incompetent yet he thinks he is

competent until he finds it out. Having said, seeking or exploring knowledge or experience and then valuing it is necessary to be successful.

b. Defiance

Some had refused to accept Prophet Muhammad *[[pbuh]]* as he was the off spring of Prophet Ismail *[[pbuh]]*, whom they did not recognize equal in status with Prophet Ishaq *[[pbuh]]* so they defied him and the divine message that was sent through him hence Almighty's favor unto them. Almighty said in Quran, "They recognized Prophet Muhammad *[[pbuh]]* as they recognize their own sons, yet they refused to accept him". Others feared that if they accept the message of monotheism, they would be at a loss – they would lose their status amongst their community or they would be disowned, humiliated, tortured or even killed? So, they continued to defy the divine favor unto them and lost.

Being defiant is an aggressive behavior. Here, despite we have the knowledge we insist on defying reality. The reasons could be many, ranging between conscious and unconscious choices. To elaborate, it is a conscious defiance if we are to concede in an argument because we don't want to accept that someone else is right. Similarly, we knowingly defy if we think that accepting a position

will hurt our EGO or we would lose our current position. There are also situations when we defy unconsciously. It was revealed in the Watergate Scandal that brain defies truth and the person continues to act naïve: The witnesses believed what they said was true, but the evidences confirmed it wasn't. Being said, if we do not deem appropriate to embrace a situation or reality despite all the required knowledge, we choose to defy it.

c. Blatant denial

Pharaoh denied feared losing his authority over the Jews in particular, whom he had taken as slaves, so he proclaimed himself a false deity and denied the divine message. Thus, he denied Almighty's favor to save him from the punishment on the day of judgement. But with his blatant denial he lost the opportunity.

It is clear from the above that denial is yet another aggressive approach. Here we resort to blatant denial of the situation or a reality thus refute others' position or favors thus forego opportunities. For example, at times we deny discipline from our parents, good advice from elders and favors from friends, for we perceive it as intrusion in our independent choices. Had we taken it positively, we could have gained advantage. Moreover, to maximize our self-proclaimed personal advantages we are likely to deny others rights on us. Such as, an enterprise to maximize its profits is likely to deny the right to fair pay to the employees, right to taxes to the government, etc. Doing so, in turn we deny

the favors that employees and the government do unto us to operate the enterprise hence their rights on us.

Conclusion

We all have been given a choice either to contest or cherish Almighty's favors on us. Those who cherish it are more likely to earn Almighty's pleasure, live rather optimistically and unleash every opportunity that comes across with a gratitude. So, let's stop contesting and start cherishing Almighty's favors unto us and earn success in this life and life hereafter.

Turn Tribulations into Positive Energy

We all face tribulations in our lives and often ask; Why me? Trivial or major, tribulations often affect our morale. Generally, we perceive tribulations as a curse or injustice. Sometimes we relate it to our deep-down awakening of guilt. A positive way of dealing with tribulations is to leverage them to build strength. Allah (Rab-ul-Alameen) enlightens in the Noble Quran Surah al-Inshirah verse 5 "So, Verily, With Every Difficulty, There is Relief."

Tribulations may hit an individual or a group of people at large. It covers a range of difficult situations and grief facing an individual. Such as; challenges, problems, troubling conditions, afflictions, misfortune and last but not the least suffering loss.

Quranic Perspective: In Sura Al Ankabut verse 2 and 3, Rab-ul-Alameen says, "Do people think that they will be left (at ease) only on their saying, [We believe] and will not be put to any test?" But We have tried those before them and Allah (swt) will surely make evident those who are truthful, and he will surely make evident the liars. In Sura Shura verse 30, Allah Rab-ul-Alameen educates us that, "Whatever affliction befalls you; it is because of what your hands have earned, and yet He overlooks many (of the wrongs you do). In Sura Al- An'am Verse 17 Rab-ul-Alameen says, "And if Allah should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him. And if He touches you with good then He is over all things

competent.’’

Thus, we have basis to conclude that tribulation is not a curse from the people nor it is a punishment from Rab-ul-Alameen. It is either a trial to which Rab-ul-Alameen purposely put us into or the outcome of our own acts of carelessness, injustice and violations that we commit so often. Even the apostles of Allah ST faced tribulations but for raising their ranks.

Dealing with a Tribulation

It is established that tribulations are a trial or aftermath of our own actions. So, let us reason out the underlying factors and develop a strategy to deal with tribulations rather constructively.

i. Tribulation as a Trial

Rub-ul-Alameen is all knowing and benevolent, and HE does not put burden on us beyond our strength. The purpose of trials is to let us establish if we have stronger faith on Him or not and if we remain on the righteous path or not come what may.

Sometimes, HE tries us by making us powerful and showering his infinite resources. Or restraining our ability (limiting our choices to act) and limiting our access to His resources (poverty). He expects us to show gratitude in the former situation and patience in the latter situation.

The two words carry a lot of responsibility on to us.

Showing gratitude means to exercise power and make use of resources as per the guidance of Allah and do not transgress His guidance in our actions and deeds. And lastly, do not take pride in what you have been given. Allah bestowed much power and wealth to Qaroon, but HE destroyed him and his wealth only because he proclaimed that he was given what he was given because of his own knowledge and efforts – a sign of pride & ego.

Allah expects us to show patience when HE tries us by restraining our power and reducing our resources. And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient. Al Anfal 8:46. Patience refers to forbearing the challenges by keeping unconditional trust on Allah and hoping that future, in this world or in the world hereafter, shall be better. It does not mean to accept the situation (failures) as-is and stop working.

ii. Tribulation as an Aftermath

When we become so used to committing wrong, violating others' rights or deviating from the right path, we become complacent if it will ever hit us back. Sadly, examples abound. And sometimes we rationalize a wrong only to commit a wrong. Whatever the case may be, facing of the aftermath is inevitable

be it sooner or later.

Most logically, in this situation the only rescue is to seek pardon from Allah with a commitment to stop. Rab-ul-Alameen says, "He does not change the condition of his slave until he (slave) changes what is in his heart (neat and deeds) Al Ra'ad 13:11.

Conclusion

Always be grateful to Rab-ul-Alameen, however the life is; keep unconditional trust on Him; hope for the better; and, be patient. Offer honest repentance to leave the sins. Try utmost to follow guidance in Quran & Hadees by utilizing to the fullest extent all Resources and Blessings awarded by Allah(swt). Finally, stop complaining and self-pity – stop saying why me!

Building Blocks of Interdependence

Birth of Prophet Jesus ﷺ to a single parent was a divine exception for a purpose otherwise Almighty has created all living organisms in pair. TEAM means, "Together everyone accomplishes more". Leaders can do nothing without followers. Relations require two persons. Being said, there is no output nor relationship so long an individual is alone. S/he must collaborate with others to accomplish – this interdependence is natural.

There is no second opinion that sustainable collaboration is built on interdependence of relationships across family, friends, work mates and last but not the least, the community we live in. In short, interdependence in relationships is as necessary as the significance of having a relationship. Relationships that are founded on dependence of one person alone are unnatural and do not sustain.

How to build and maintain interdependence in relationships. The answer is simple; acknowledge the need for each other and behave in a mutually responsible manner. A theory in management suggests that people come together for a common goal and stay

Common examples of insensitivities:

- ✓ Ridiculing and criticizing personality
- ✓ Ignoring others' feelings, expectations and concerns,
- ✓ Behaving independent of how others would feel.

together to achieve continuity of the satisfaction of their individual needs, for which they depend on each other within the group.

Put it simply, it calls for behaving with sympathy, empathy and sensitivity: -

- ✓ SYMPATHY IS SHOWING THAT YOU CARE
- ✓ EMPATHY IS UNDERSTANDING SOMEONE ELSE'S PAIN
- ✓ SENSITIVITY IS BEHAVING RESPONSIBLY - NOT BEHAVING IN A WAY THAT HURTS SOMEONE ELSE

Conclusion

Sympathy is the least one should do - it is more responsible than apathy. Apathy is ignoring others' positions and interests. Empathy is more humane and often becomes the stepping stone for sensitivity. It is understanding and respecting the feelings, emotions and interests of others. Sensitivity is an interdependent mindset and has boundaries. It is harnessing actions in the manner to prevent hurting others, while not succumbing to others' expectations by compromising own reasonable goals.

In short, to reap the advantages of interdependence in relationships one should always show concern for each other; understand and respect each other's preferences and concerns; and, must behave responsibly in a relationship.

Ego and Pride are Foe

Satan refused to obey Almighty when he was told to prostrate Prophet Adam [[pbuh]] – it was his Ego! Qaroon proclaimed that all that he has been given is because of his own competence – it was his pride!

Acknowledging that there is no power and no strength except with Almighty [La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah] should kill the EGO and PRIDE altogether. Clear evidence exist that Ego and Pride are the foes. Almighty revoked Satan's earlier status of a muqarib, when he responded with Ego. And HE destroyed Qaroon and this entire wealth when he responded with Pride.

EGO is our deep assumption of being superior and privileged vis-à-vis others. A typical thinking of an egocentric person is like: I am ok, you are not; I am right, you are not; I am good, you are not; I must always win, you lose; I have rights; you don't; etc.

PRIDE is our perception of having attained or achieved on sheer one's own will-power, strengths and efforts. Such is only an illusion of our perception. It is true that so many persons who have the will-power, strengths and make efforts achieve much lesser. The explanation to this is that it is Almighty who bestows to us, all that we achieve and possess. Examples abound.

Cost of Ego and Pride

EGO and Pride both give a gratifying feeling but have a BIG cost: Who is ready to pay?

EGO illusions self-assessment and make people less sensitive to others' strengths and rights. When people fail to assess themselves honestly, they live in a fantasy world; they block all their opportunities to improve; they fail to develop mutually complimenting relationships; soon others out-performs them.

Egocentric persons are self-centered; hear but do not listen to others point of view; they insult and humiliate others; they don't get cooperation from others; they are equally bad leaders and team players; they make less informed decisions; they work for personal gratification alone; etc. Such are the persons who fall flat in their lives and career, at the end of the day.

PRIDE makes people complacent and arrogant. They don't respect and acknowledge others; they stick with old fashioned ideas and rituals; they don't think rationally and show readiness to change and improve. They are less pragmatic and innovative in finding solutions to the problems; they are rigid on their positions; etc.

People with PRIDE over estimate their strengths and often fail; they make impulsive decisions and lose; they fail to command respect; none sympathize with them when they fall; no one wants

to relate himself or herself with them; last but not the least, pride reduce their sky-high achievements of the pasts to nothing.

Conclusion

To succeed in life and career one needs to act realistically, make informed decisions; always respect and acknowledge others; and, the more one attains the more humble and grateful s/he should act.

Myth to Reality of Change

The biggest myth of our time is “Change” itself. We follow this myth religiously so much so that often Change itself becomes the purpose and the real purpose that should rationalize the change is lost.

Consequently, change is forced upon us instead of us leading the change. A process that can be termed as “Reverse Empowerment”. This means we make decisions that cost more than the gains.

So much has changed since my childhood. Change has brought new face to life – We have experienced a lot change for better or worse and a lot more for the heck of change! Human Rights given by Almighty were never so much acknowledged as being done today. Education & Research, Technology, Artificial-Intelligence and Life-style changes are a few major hallmarks of change. Yet change has a flip side for worse. Ironically, in the process we have become self-centered and competing.

Change seems to have altered wisdom to whims; truth to falsehood; rational to ritual; levelheadedness to impulsiveness; reality to dreams and fantasies; reasoning to justification; soberness to fun; knowledge to ignorance and gossips; relationships

into transactions; morals and values to political norms; last but not the least, faith to belief.

It is time to pause and ponder! Must we change for the sake of change. Though we often fall prey to the myth of change, we ideally need to lead the change with candid reasoning. Remember, "Crow tried flying like a goose, forgot to fly even as a crow".

Before we change must ask to ourselves, what to change? when to change? and can we change?

What to change?

- a. If we want to find truth and seek clarity, we should change our thinking, and
- b. If we want to change the outcome, we should change the process.

When to change?

- c. When rituals hide rationality, distortions eclipse truth and noise obscure clarity, and
- d. When methods affect processes efficiencies and undervalue outcomes.

Can we change?

- a. Do we have wisdom for the change?
- b. Will we really succeed changing?
- c. Will we improve?

Conclusion

Prophet Muhammad [[pbuh]] said, "If a man's today is not better than yesterday, he is doomed." In this context change is a must but when it is for better. This follows, our quest for change should be from worse to better and from better to best. A good change is always such that brings forth; -

- a. Real improvement, not just a change of face.
- b. Realign processes and outcomes to the purpose and values.
- c. Establish human values and practices; strengthen relationships; and enable real success.
- d. Last but not the least, enable efficiency, effectiveness and compliance.